

The

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# Volstate Guard

NTC EDITION



## Tennessee's 278<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Triumphs Over National Training Center

The Tennessee Army National Guard, spearheaded by the largest combat unit in the state, the 278<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), successfully negotiated both the harsh environment and the opposing forces at the U. S. Army's National Training Center (NTC).



"Our soldiers did an outstanding job on everything from our deployment from Tennessee, through the preparation phase and into the combat exercise." Said Col. Max Haston, 278<sup>th</sup> Commander. "This NTC rotation has been the focus of our training for more than three years, and it's rewarding for everyone involved to see it completed successfully."

"The NTC is the premier training site for the United States Army and is home to the finest combat training organization in the world, the Army's 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment. Couple this outstanding opposing force with the harsh environment of California's Mojave Desert, and you have an

overwhelming challenge to any combat organization." Said BG Gus Hargett, Tennessee's Assistant Adjutant General for Army and Commander of Task Force Volunteer.

The training at the NTC is designed to task the unit to perform at it's highest level of expertise, then as the unit becomes more proficient, controllers "raise the bar" to make the unit perform at an even higher level. The 278th ACR deployed tactically into a harsh desert climate, under tough, war-like conditions, and fought a smart, free-thinking, determined opposing force. Every move they made was under the observation of skilled, seasoned Observer/Controllers (OC's), and they fought a war in the desert under war-like conditions...where the only thing missing is shooting live ammo. After every mission, the units were then taken through an after-action-review methodology that resulted in learning good lessons. These lessons were then put to play on the next mission.

"We became a better combat organization every day of the exercise," said COL Haston. "I saw soldiers and units progress with every action. Our soldiers did an outstanding job, and I'm extremely proud of each and every one of them."

The bottom line...the 278th ACR is a much more ready unit now because of the NTC experience.

The Tennessee rotation was the largest Army National Guard rotation ever conducted at the NTC. Over 600 railcars of equipment deployed to Fort Irwin from seven locations in five states to supply the exercise.

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# Preparation . . . Key to NTC Success

*Guest Columnist*  
**COL Fred Pickens**  
*Senior Army Advisor*  
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“Tennessee’s State Area Command (STARC) Headquarters and the units involved did a superb job in preparing. I think the ingredients to overall success lies in the outstanding preparation done by the 278<sup>th</sup>, the STARC headquarters and the Major Command commanders and staffs.” Said Colonel Fred Pickens, Senior Army Advisor for Tennessee.

The secret to the success of this rotation was:

- The state focused on the NTC mission early.
- The right leadership was in place early on.
- It became a “State Mission”...not just a 230th ASG mission or a 278th mission.
- It had a proper priority put on it.
- A well thought out plan was developed...and more importantly the plan was followed.
- The STARC and all the units involved had the right “attitude” throughout the mission (ie, this was training mission, not a test...here to “learn”, etc). This attitude is “extremely” important when at the NTC.
- The plan was well briefed at NGB, and the right amount of money was budgeted.

The preparation for the NTC was well done (ie, REHAT, Ole Bill’s University, COMDEX’es, LOGGEX’es, LTP, doing the HMMWV TEWT following LTP, etc).

The STARC, 230th and 278th Rock Drills done prior to deployment (Jan-May) were also keys to success. It got everybody on the same sheet of music. Also, the MOA between the TOFM units worked well.

The deployment of troops and equipment to NTC could not have gone better. There were some rough points (ie, lost train), but everything pretty much went according to plan. Multiple rail load sites, movement of soldiers, buying the soldiers camelbacks, feeding them a meal, rail load teams doing their work safely, were all factors for the success of the mission.

IN BOUND TOFM - a “major” success story. More equipment was moved, faster, under harsh tactical conditions, than any TOFM had ever moved. The NTC Cdr and staff were extremely complimentary about the success of the 230th ASG. I think a story could be written about this alone.

RSOI prep - another success story...the STARC and 278th ADVON worked extremely well. They got their vehicles instrumented faster than anyone could imagine, their ULLs training and linkage went well, and equipment was properly staged for the main body.

Force-on-Force- It is hard to make comments here, as the good and not-so-good comments made by the OCs to the 278th is somewhat “privileged information”. However, I think you could write that the 278th ACR deployed tactically into a harsh desert climate, under tough, war-like conditions, and fought a smart, free-thinking, determined opposing force.

You could mention the major missions they did, that every move they made was under observation of skilled, seasoned OCs, and they fought a war in the desert (under war-like conditions...where the only thing missing is shooting live ammo). That after every mission, they were then taken through an after-action-review methodology that resulted in learning good lessons. These lessons were then put to play on the next mission. The bottom line...the 278th ACR is a much more ready unit now then when they went, and if they are mobilized, this will greatly assist them.

In other areas:

- Safety record as good, and the heat injury rate was not bad. Soldiers stayed hydrated. If units don’t do the right thing at NTC, then soldiers can die.
- Soldier attitude was “excellent” throughout.
- Environmental spills were minimal.
- The STARC kept a well-staffed HQ at NTC throughout the entire mission, with proper leadership.

All in all...a great mission, and one to be proud of.

# 278th ACR Excels At National Training Center

*By: Randy Harris  
Director of Public Affairs  
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**Fort Irwin, CA** - The National Training Center... Just mention the name of the premier training site in the United States Army and you send a tremor of anticipation and dread through most professional soldiers.



The NTC has taken the best the Army has to offer, and in many cases sent them home with their tail between their legs wondering what just happened to them.

So how could a National Guard unit, a bunch of “weekend warriors”, hope to hold their own with the combined forces of the Mojave Desert, the 120+ degree temperature, and the undefeated home team, the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment?

That is the question that ran through the minds of both Tennessee Army National Guard soldiers and leaders more than four years ago when the Tennessee Guard prepared to send the 278<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment into the Valley of Death known as the National Training Center.

The time between the decision to undertake this massive training exercise and the actual move to Fort Irwin was filled with activities. Annual Training 2001 was conducted at Fort Stewart, GA where the Regiment prepared tactically for their trek to the desert just 12 short months away. Following AT-01, the Regiment conducted a Brigade and Battle Staff Command Training Exercise, which consisted of a six day, extremely intensive seminar at FT.

Leavenworth, KS, followed by a Command Post exercise at the Volunteer Training Site in Smyrna, TN. The Regiment also internally conducted a Fire Support Exercise (FCX) utilizing the latest Digital equipment as well as a Logistical Exercise (LOGEX) also conducted at the Volunteer Training Site.

Task Force Volunteer was formed to act as the higher headquarters for the operation. Their mission was to coordinate the activities of the Inbound Theater Opening Force Module (TOFM) spearheaded by Tennessee’s 230<sup>th</sup> Area Support Group. The 230<sup>th</sup> ASG provided administrative support during the TOFM exercise, and coordination of the Outbound TOFM consisting of soldiers from the 371<sup>st</sup> Combat Support Group, Ohio Army National Guard.

Finally, the planning was complete, more than 600 rail cars were loaded with everything from M1 Abrams Main Battle Tanks to individual equipment packed in CONEX boxes, trucks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, and HMMWV’s.



The move to “Mojavia” and “Krasnovia” had begun. The “friendly forces” of the 278<sup>th</sup> ACR would arrive on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002.

Equipment began arriving at the Yermo Marine Logistics Base railhead two weeks before the arrival of the 278<sup>th</sup> ACR. The job of the 230<sup>th</sup> ASG and the Inbound TOFM was to move this massive amount of military equipment some 30 miles to the equipment staging area at Fort Irwin.

Assisted by advance members of the 278<sup>th</sup> ACR, the 230<sup>th</sup> ASG made more than 1,200 trips moving in the 278<sup>th</sup> equipment while moving out the active Army’s 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division equipment.

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The previous record for equipment movement was less than 400 trips.

Upon arrival at Fort Irwin, Task Force Volunteer began the operations necessary to support the Tennessee rotation with G-1, G-3, G-4, and G-5 operations. Then, on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the first soldiers of the 278<sup>th</sup> ACR arrived at Southern California Logistical Airport and entered the country of “Mojavia”.

The first days were a flurry of activity, moving equipment, getting soldiers settled in less than luxurious accommodations, marrying-up soldiers with their equipment, and adjusting to life in “Mojavia”.

The 278<sup>th</sup> leadership met every challenge with professionalism and tact. From meeting with the government of “Mojavia” to dealing with civilian protestors and terrorist organizations opposed to the American intervention within their country.

It became a matter of relief when the Regiment was finally allowed to leave the containment area and move to the “battlefield”. Finally, the soldiers of the Regiment were allowed to do the job they had trained for their entire career.

The Regiment moved to the battle area and even before crossing the line of departure, the enemy struck...hard! Several vehicles were “destroyed” and crews “killed”. The OPFOR was playing on their home field and the 278<sup>th</sup> suffered the fate of the visiting team.

After each engagement came the After Action Reports (AAR), explaining just what had gone right and especially what had gone wrong. Not much went right during the first days on the battlefield, but with each engagement, the troopers of the Regiment became a little more savvy, a little more accustomed to the days and nights in the desert, and a little more aware of the OPFOR operations. After each engagement the troopers became a little more confident in their abilities, their tactics, and the performance of their equipment. And with that confidence, the realization grew that just maybe the OPFOR could be defeated.

Just maybe these Tennessee Volunteers could pull victory from the jaws of defeat. Just maybe, we were equal to the task of the NTC.

The desert didn’t seem so foreboding. Troops were moving with stealth and cunning, finding and fixing the enemy, using the desert hills and waddies to mask their movement. They became comfortable moving at night utilizing the state-of-the-art night vision capabilities of the M1’s and Bradleys.

Successes were small, but each day performance improved. Scout vehicles were registering “kills”, tanks were firing from hull down positions taking out parts of the enemy echelons. Even the UH-1 simulated HIND-D helicopter became less and less threatening as the troopers learned to combat it.

Finally, the last day of the battle dawned. This was the final chance to achieve victory. Several senior leaders from both Task Force Volunteer, the NTC and Ft. Irwin were on hand to watch the final battle.

It seemed that the OPFOR had once again taken on the visiting team and emerged victorious.

This was the final line of defense that very few visiting forces had ever breached. This is the line in the sand where the final battle would end.

Suddenly, a lone M1 shot through a gap between two of the desert hills. “Just a lucky move”, laughed one of the OPFOR leaders watching the battle, “that’s the only one that will get through.”

Then, out of the dust, three more 278<sup>th</sup> ACR M1’s breached the OPFOR lines, and the sure victory the OPFOR had anticipated, the victory they had felt so often, slowly slipped from their grasp. The 278<sup>th</sup> ACR, like their Tennessee forefathers breaking through the Hindenburg Line, had broken through the OPFOR final defenses.

The NTC doesn’t keep score, after all, this is a training mission, and as long as the training unit becomes more proficient, it really doesn’t matter who wins or who loses. But don’t expect the 278<sup>th</sup> ACR or the 11<sup>th</sup> ACR to buy that story . . . . .



***They both  
know who won  
the final battle.***



## Scenes from the Desert 2002



278th ACR continued from page 1

It was also the first Army National Guard rotation with the Theater Opening Force Module (TOFM) mission on both front and back ends done by National Guard soldiers.

The Theater Opening Force Module comprised of the 230<sup>th</sup> Area Support Group, Tennessee Army National Guard, and the 371<sup>st</sup> Combat Support Group, Ohio National Guard, moved massive amounts of equipment to and from Fort Irwin and the Marine Depot at Yermo, CA, more that 30 miles away. M1 Abrams Main Battle Tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, trucks, and "Hum-Vees" were loaded along with endless pallets of equipment onto giant Heavy Equipment Transports (HET's) for the movement.

This the largest deployment of Tennessee troops since WWII involved 15 states, but the majority of the soldiers came from the Volunteer State as the Tennessee Army National Guard force structure allowed it to provide the bulk of the force.

## The VOLSTATE GUARD

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*Scenes from the Desert 2002*











# Evolution of “The Rock”

